

## COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT FOR THE NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS

Unconfirmed minutes of a meeting of the Committee of Management for the Natural Sciences Tripos held at 2:00 pm on **Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2010** in the Dixon Room, Pathology, Tennis Court Road.

Present: Dr N Holmes (Chairman), Dr P Barrie, Professor T W Clyne, Dr P Duffett-Smith, Dr S Fulton, Professor H Griffiths, Professor R Horgan, Dr J Keeler, Dr M Mason, Dr R Padman, Professor S Redfern, Professor D Ritchie, Dr S Russell, and Mrs E Oliver (Secretary).

By invitation: Dr Amyas Phillips for item 5 (minute 548)

Apologies: Mr N Donnelly, Mr F Floether, Professor A Mycroft, Dr C Schwiening, Professor J Secord/Dr L Kassell.

### **544) MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2010 were agreed.

### **545) MATTERS ARISING NOT ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA**

A summary sheet of action points and matters arising was circulated (**CM.631**). The comment from the Department of History & Philosophy of Science (**Minute 534**) with regard to the proposed changes to administrative support was noted. It was felt that the Department's concerns were unfounded and that they should be reassured that there was no intention that the support for the Department would be any less than in the past.

Dr Padman reported that the Schools of Biological Science and Physical Sciences had jointly agreed to purchase a campus licence for MATLAB which was relevant to the Part IA module in Scientific Computing. This would provide access to the software for staff and students using computers within the University and Colleges but could not be installed on students' own computers. This was a temporary arrangement which would provide breathing space whilst recurrent funding was negotiated.

### **546) REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD**

A paper of reported business was circulated (**CM.632**). It included:

- The minutes of the meeting of the Faculty of Biology, Biological Sciences Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010 (**CM.633a**) were circulated and noted.
- The minutes of the meeting of the Physical Sciences Education Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2010 (**CM.633b**) were circulated and noted.
- A notice issued by the Board of Examinations on the Use of Electronic Calculators in University Examinations (**CM.634**) was circulated. Attention was drawn to the change for next year, whereby students taking NST IA Mathematics would no longer be able to use a calculator in the examinations. This amendment had been requested following discussions with the Senior Examiners for NST IA Mathematics on the functions available on current calculators and their use in the examination.
- An updated Programme Specification (**CM.635**) was circulated which had been revised following comments received. A further amendment to the content for entry criteria to Part III was agreed. This removed the detail from the published text and referred candidates to the current Reporter document. The Reporter documents for

2011-12 and 2012-13 are in preparation. The revised programme specification will be uploaded to the Natural Sciences website together with the updated subject Programme Specifications.

- The Guide to Courses has recently been updated and the revised version was circulated (**CM.636**). The Committee noted the variable length of entries and was interested to know whether users of the Guide were current staff and students or from outside the University.  
**Action:** Secretary to contact University Computing Services.
- Following a recent representation to the Applications Committee, an allowance had been made to the candidate named below in respect of a dissertation mark, enabling him to be moved to the 2.2 Class.  
R C H W Bartel Taverner, *SE*, Natural Sciences Tripos (Biological and Biomedical Sciences), Part II, 2009

#### **547) THE BOLOGNA PROCESS AND THE EUROPEAN CREDIT TRANSFER SCHEME (ECTS): MASTER'S COURSES**

A paper was circulated (**CM.637**) on the assignment of ECTS (European Credit Transfer Scheme) equivalences to Master's level courses. This is of relevance to NST for the Part III courses and the Committee was asked to note the section on Integrated Masters on page 3. Faculty Boards had been asked to review the learning outcomes, provide appropriate benchmarks, and propose the appropriate ECTS assignments. It is expected that a four year course including a Part III would fall into the 270 ECTS category i.e. 3 x 60 for Parts IA, IB, II plus 90 for Part III. The diverse nature of MPhils and the lack of distinction between a Part III and MPhil in some subjects made credit allocation complex. This difficulty had been recognised and the paper sought to encourage Faculties to provide justification to support the documentation that the International Office was required to provide, usually for only a small number of students each year. Discussion took place on whether Master's style marks should be awarded for Part III subjects and whether it was possible to award different credits according to the level of success. It was agreed that Part III subjects in NST were taught at a 2.1 level and those candidates who performed well were PhD ready. The Committee agreed that the suggested process was an acceptable way forward at present and noted that Faculty Boards would be providing the relevant information.

#### **548) CARET COURSE TOOLS UPDATE**

Dr Amyas Phillips explained the rationale behind the Course Tools project and its use of Natural Sciences as a model. The NST curriculum and timetable were complex and thus a barrier to change and the objective of the process was to enable innovation. The project hoped to capture a model that could be re-used both within NST and ultimately for other Triposes. Dr Phillips gave a brief presentation on the NST timetable from a constraints-based perspective. A table of constraints and values was circulated (**CM.638**) and discussed. Some additional factors were suggested such as availability of rooms, location of Departments, sizes of groups, correlation between subjects. Double slots, two-week timetables and Departmental moves were also mentioned. The appropriate utilisation of available space was of growing importance within the University and could help forwarding planning. Whilst the Management Committee was responsible for the timetable, outside issues such as links to other Triposes and timetables for other Parts of the NST also needed to be taken into consideration. It would be difficult to implement any change

without the complete consensus of all those concerned. The Chairman thanked Dr Phillips for his presentation and suggested that the table be circulated for members to complete.

**Action:** Dr Phillips to circulate table for members to complete.

#### **549) USE OF TURNITIN FOR PLAGIARISM DETECTION**

An extract from the University policy on the use of plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) was circulated (**CM.639**). Following discussion at the Biological Sciences Committee, the Committee was asked to consider whether there should be a consistent approach across the Tripos. Plagiarism was not thought to be a significant problem across NST and some subjects were already using Turnitin to different extents according to their specific needs. Following discussion it was agreed that the use of Turnitin and its associated consent requirements should be the responsibility of individual Departments.

#### **550) ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Dr Duffett-Smith asked whether the timing of this last Committee Meeting could be reconsidered because of its impact on examination-related work taking place at the same time. Various possibilities were suggested, such as postponing the meeting further, bringing it forward, conducting any formal business by circulation, moving the first meeting in the Easter Term. The present timing was a first-time trial for this year and it was thought preferable to defer a firm decision until later in the year when other administrative matters would be reviewed.

Dr Holmes explained that as he would be on sabbatical leave for the academic year 2010-11 a deputy would be needed for the short interregnum preceding the meeting in October 2011. Dr Keeler agreed to accept this responsibility.

#### **551) DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting shall take place at **2:00 pm on Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> October 2010**. Location to be confirmed.